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They're back

Measles has made a return to Niagara
and that's definitely not a good thing
Page 6

Op not frittered

Roll up the rim to help others
in the community win
Page 18

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Let the games begin



GREG FURMINGER / QMI AGENCY
NIAAGARA
Pictured is the starting point for the Frostbike Winter Mountain Bike Race last year during Port Colborne Sportsfest. Entry to this year's event sold out within 36 hours. See story and schedule on page 3.



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Margie Spence
President/Broker

LOCAL NEWS

■ **'PORTICIPATE':** Port Colborne Sportsfest runs Friday to Family Day Monday

Fun and games for weekend

GREG FURMINGER
QMI Agency Niagara

Shoot a puck, shoot a clay pigeon or simply take your best shot at snow disc golf, sno-pitch or if you're not that athletic, participate in a wine and cheese event or a round of name that tune trivia.

These and many more activities are featured as part of Port Colborne Sportsfest, during the coming long Family Day holiday weekend.

The family-friendly festival attracts people from across Niagara and beyond, with various local charities benefiting from proceeds of events.

Many activities are free — including two-hour family skates Sunday and Monday and various YMCA activities including swimming and gymnasium games.

Part of the objective of Sportsfest is to get people to "Porticipate" — the city's official get-active buzzword. It's also aimed at fostering a sense of civic pride while promoting local community and sports groups.

There is still time to sign up for most of the events — except volleyball which takes place both Saturday and Sunday, and the Frostbrite Winter Mountain Bike Race that takes place on the Sunday morning near Robin Hood flour mill.

"We sold out in about 36 hours," said Frostbrite organizer Jeff Kerton, noting the sixth annual event is capped at 100 riders.

Many entries are coming from the Hamilton-Dundas and Guelph and Waterloo areas.

"That's where they have all the big bikes with the fat tires," he said.

But Kerton noted there are fatbike rides every Sunday out of the local Pedal bike shop. Riders have been keeping trails packed down, and some people have taken to snow shovels to keep the course well-groomed. But come the day of the event "we're at the mercy of Mother Nature."

If you're just into being a spectator, the Mayor's Cup Hockey Tournament takes place Friday and Saturday at the Vale Health and Wellness Centre.

Have different tastes? Restaurant Greg Polson will be holding two events at Canalside Restaurant: a wine and cheese tasting on Friday night and, on Saturday night, name that tune trivia.

"It's a lot of fun, that one," he said of the musical guessing game that awards terms points for identifying artists and song titles, and extra for dancing.

"By the time we're halfway through it, everyone is up and there's a conga line," he said.

The event that runs every other Saturday at the West St. restaurant will take on a love theme because this year it falls on Valentine's Day. Entry is \$10 a person, with proceeds to benefit Port Cane.

The wine event which costs



GREG FURMINGER/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA
John Cauchi of Burlington navigates down a hill during the Frostbrite Winter Mountain Bike Race last year during Port Colborne Sportsfest. Entry to this year's event sold out within 36 hours.

\$20 a head, and also benefits Port Cane, puts a variety of variety of white and red wines with artisan cheeses. Contact the restaurant to make reservations.

Saturday's lineup also includes nine holes of snow golf or 18 holes of snow disc golf at Whisky Run Golf Course, and costs \$29 a person with proceeds going to Sir John Colborne Youth Soccer; a daylong bocce tournament that is open to 12 teams at the

Vale centre, at a cost of \$50 a team; and a sno-pitch softball tournament that takes place on the Elizabeth St. ball diamonds, costing \$200 per team and promising a three-game minimum.

Volleyball tournaments for men's and women's divisions are played Saturday, while co-ed action is Sunday. All games are at Port Colborne High School. Registration closed Sunday.

Other events taking place Sunday include a trap and skeet shoot at Port Colborne and District Conservation Club on Concession 2 — bring your own shotgun and shells — and a free Niagara Whal-

ers Family Night game at the arena starting 7:30 p.m.

For a full lineup of events, times and contact information, visit the city's website at <http://portcolborne.ca/page/sportsfest>.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Friday

Mayor's Cup Hockey

Tournament, 6-10 p.m.

Wine and cheese tasting at Canalside, 9 p.m.

Free YMCA Youth Action (sports trivia, soccer, spectacular scavenger hunt, video games, ages 9-14) at Vale centre, 6-9 p.m.

Saturday

Sno pitch tournament at

Vale centre, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Volleyball tournament,

men's and women's, 8:30

a.m. to 6 p.m.

Bocce tournament at Vale

centre, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Mayor's Cup Hockey

Tournament, 9 a.m. to 5:30

p.m.

Snow golf and snow disc

at Whisky Run, 11:30 a.m.

to 2:30 p.m.

Minor box lacrosse

introduction at Vale centre,

noon to 2 p.m.

Free "family bounce" and

open swim at Vale centre, 1-4

p.m.

Pickleball challenge, YMCA

vs. city staff at Vale centre,

4:30 p.m.

Name that tune trivia at

Canalside, 8 p.m.

Sunday

Volleyball co-ed

tournament, 8:30 a.m. to 6

p.m.

Mayor's Cup Hockey

Tournament, 10:30 a.m. to

12:30 p.m.

Frostbrite winter mountain

bike race (sold out), 11 a.m.

to 2 p.m.

Free family skate at Vale

centre, noon to 2 p.m.

Trap and skeet shoot at

Port Colborne and District

Conservation Club, 1-4 p.m.

Free "family bounce" and

open swim, 1-4 p.m.

Pickleball open to all, Vale

gym, 2:30-4 p.m.

Niagara Whalers vs. South

River free Family Night game,

7:30 p.m.

Monday (Family Day)

Free family skate at Vale

centre, 1-3 p.m.

Free open gym and swim

at Vale centre, 1-3 p.m.

— for additional details and

contact information, including

names, phone numbers and

e-mail addresses, visit <http://portcolborne.ca/page/sportsfest>

at <http://portcolborne.ca/page/sportsfest>

ONLINE
EXTRA

See the sportsfest brochure with
more details and contact numbers

inPortNews.ca

■ **BIZ BUZZ**

Nominations sought for chamber awards

Awards season has arrived.

Nominations are open now for the Oscars of the Port Colborne and Wainfleet business community — the annual President's Awards.

It's time when the area's best and brightest are lauded for their efforts by the Port Colborne-Wainfleet

Chamber of Commerce.

But before the trophies can be handed out at the President's Awards Reception on March 25, deserving businesses and individuals must be nominated for the honour.

Chamber executive director Dolores Fabiano said she's anticipating a "full slate" of nominations in the following categories:

Business of the Year, New Business of the Year, Women in Business, Citizen of the Year, Youth Citizen of the Year (ages 15 to 19) and Junior Youth Citizen of the Year (ages 6 to 14).

"We have lots of best-kept secrets in Port Colborne and Wainfleet. That needs to change," she said.

"We need to recognize the

people here that are doing great things... it really helps with community pride."

The chamber believes it's important to honour those who make up "the fabric of the community," Fabiano said.

"They're the businesspeople investing in the community, the volunteers investing in the community,

the young people investing in the community."

It's about recognizing the work of those individuals, she said, and about inspiring others to embark on endeavors of their own.

Winners will be announced at the awards reception, which takes place at the Italian Canadian Cultural Centre at 223 Bell St.

in Port Colborne.

Tickets for the reception cost \$45 each, two for \$85 or \$300 for a table of eight, and are available by phoning 905-834-9765.

Nomination forms are available online at www.pcwchamber.com and can be e-mailed to katie@pcwchamber.com. Deadline for nominations is Feb. 18.

Maybe we just don't get science

The first science book I remember reading was titled, *The First Men in the World*. It was a gift from my cousin, and purported to tell the tale of our prehistoric ancestors' struggle for survival.

I loved that book. By today's standards, it is hopelessly outdated. Yet the worn, battered paperback still sits on my book shelf. Other books played a much bigger role in lighting the fire of interest in science in my mind — Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*, for example — but *The First Men in the World* was my introduction to a bigger universe.

Science, of course, is what makes just about everything in our modern world work.

As likely as not, you're reading this column online using technology developed by scientists. Your smartphone, your car, the food you bought today, the antibiotics that cured your pneumonia — all the result of science.

That's the intense irony about our culture. We use the products of science nearly every minute of our lives without thinking, but we simultaneously harbour a deep distrust of science.

Those feelings were on full display last week as we watched the re-emergence of measles in Canada, including one case right here in Niagara.

A recent survey showed 20% of residents in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta believe the measles vaccine causes autism. It's a staggering statistic, given that we know for a fact — thanks to science — that it doesn't.

This disconnect between science reality and common knowledge is not limited to vaccines.

Science also shows us climate change is real, evolution is fact, genetically modified foods aren't killing us, cellphone transmissions haven't resulted in a massive spike in brain cancers and human beings did, in fact, land on the surface of the moon.

But if you dare to venture into the nether realm of the Internet, you'll find a kaleidoscope of paranoid conspiracy theories, junk science and fantasy that all says the same thing — science is a lie.

(These messages are broadcast using a product of science, but the purveyors of this nonsense don't trouble themselves with

that.)

It isn't that scientists don't make mistakes. They do. Humans are effectively mistake-generating machines.

We're also unabashedly greedy, and there are always those who try pass off frauds as science, from the doctor who faked the study claiming autism is caused by vaccines, to the clown who made the Pildown Man "fossil."

These sorts of incidents are often taken as evidence the process cannot be trusted. Yet, frauds in science are uncovered by more science. The process itself is ruthlessly self-correcting, forever trying to disprove its own conclusions. That's its power.

I suspect a big part of the problem is culturally, we don't understand what science does. There is simply too much data for one person to get a grip on, and that mountain of information grows exponentially every year.

For instance, if your cellphone died, could you fix it on your own? Including manufacturing the parts you'd need?

Do you even know how those parts are

made? Probably not, and we're talking about a device you use every day.

It doesn't help that most science journalism often does little to improve our general scientific literacy. After all, the journalists writing about science are often no more expert than their readers.

Maybe that's the point. We're divorced from the basic bits of science.

A cellphone works because, well, it works. Vaccines protect us from illness because they do. Many of us view it as a kind of magic, I think. And that is a very real problem.

But getting at the facts behind say, vaccines, takes work. It means reading not some conspiracy blog, but the primary sources of scientific journals. That is time-consuming and, honestly, more than a little dry.

Unfortunately, there really is no way around that — unless you choose blind acceptance in something that might be wildly inaccurate.

Knowledge might be power, but you have to work for it.

grant.lalonde@sunmedia.ca

Shipwrecks – Dalla

SKIP CHILLIAM
For QMI Agency Niagara



Dalla, shown in this undated photo at Iroquois Lock.

Former Dalla caught fire more than a year after being laid up.

What must be considered as a suspicious fire caused heavy damage to the idle freighter *Marmaras* at Lefkas, Greece, on Sept. 1, 1983. The ship had been laid up there for more than a year.

This vessel, in better days, had been a seaway trader as *Dalla* in 1971. It had been built for the Elder Dempster Line at Port Glasgow, Scotland, and completed in April 1961. The 141.75-metre-long vessel had five cargo holds and likely spent considerable time trading between the United Kingdom and Africa.

Dalla was sold in 1980 and placed under the flag of Greece as *Marmaras* but was later resold to Seaglean Maritime Ltd. and re-registered in Cyprus. It appears that the ship saw little success for these two concerns and was laid up at Lefkas, Greece, on Feb. 12, 1982.

The fatal fire broke out in the engine room and spread through the accommodation area leaving the ship a total loss. It was sold to Yugoslavian shipbrokers and arrived at Split, under tow, for dismantling on June 19, 1984.

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For further information, contact Greg Fumming.

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Heridge subsidiary takes over biodiesel plant

QMI Agency Niagara

A multi-million-dollar biodiesel plant in Welland now has officially switched hands. Atlantic Biodiesel announced recently it has received full and final approval to immediately begin managerial operations of the \$50-million former Great Lakes Biodiesel facility in Dain City. Atlantic Biodiesel is a new subsidiary of Luxembourg-based Heridge SARL, which won GLB's assets in a recent bankruptcy auction. Michael Paszti has assumed the role of chief operating officer of the subsidiary struck to operate the Welland plant.

"We are strongly committed to the facility's

success, and Michael will be an integral, on-the-ground team member whose priority will be to quickly get operations up and running to full capacity," the company said in a news release. "Welland is our home, and Atlantic Biodiesel is focused on continued engagement with local elected and community officials as we work to renew discussions with the federal government. With the support of the community and various levels of government, Atlantic Biodiesel will fulfil its goal of becoming a world-class producer of biodiesel fuel targeting the unique needs of the Canadian fuels complex, and play a critical part in provincial and federal greenhouse gas reduction efforts."

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Dr. Linus Pauling, two-time Nobel Prize winner, showed that large amounts of vitamin C and lysine are needed to prevent coronary attacks. 25 years ago Pauling reported that animals make vitamin C and humans do not.

Dr. William Stehbens, at Wellington University in New Zealand, proved Pauling was right. Stehbens' research showed that coronary arteries closest to the heart are under the greatest pressure. This causes collagen to fracture resulting in the formation of a blood clot.

Vitamin C is required to make collagen, the glue that holds coronary cells together, just like mortar is needed for bricks. Lysine, like steel rods in cement, makes collagen stronger.

Dr. Sydney Bush, has since proven that vitamin C can reverse atherosclerosis. Dr. Bush took retinal photographs, then started his patients on high doses of vitamin C and lysine. A year later,

scans showed the atherosclerosis had regressed in the retinal arteries. This also occurs in coronary arteries.

My own story is well documented... almost twenty years ago, after my heart attack, I researched it, and then I started

taking high doses of vitamin C, plus lysine. I am 92 years old now and still going stronger than ever.

For several years I have been trying to find a company that could formulate this heart healthy combination of vitamin C and lysine. It's called Medi-C Plus and it is available at Rosemary's Natural Choices. *Dr. W. Clifford Jones*

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■ HEALTH

Measles confirmed in Niagara region

GRANT LAFLECHE
QMI Agency Niagara

The measles has returned to Niagara — and the worst could be yet to come.

The Niagara public health department is asking residents who may have come into contact with the infected woman to contact their family doctor.

At the same time, it is bracing for more measles cases because of declining vaccination rates in local elementary schools.

On Feb. 2, Niagara's public health department received lab confirmation of the first measles case in the region since 1996 — in this case, a woman in her 20s in Niagara Falls. She was not vaccinated against the virus.

The return of the highly infectious disease worries public health officials because of falling vaccination rates at area schools.

"We are certainly prepared for more cases," said Dr. Val Jaeger, Niagara's medical officer of health.

"It makes me sad, because the vaccine against measles is very effective and safe for almost everyone."

The true effectiveness of vaccines is found in what health officials call "herd immunity" — when enough people are vaccinated against a disease, it protects the few who cannot take the vaccine due to allergies or other health issues.

Jaeger said measles is "one of the most contagious viruses out there, because it is airborne."

The measles virus can remain airborne and dangerous for several hours after it has been released into the air by a cough or sneeze, she said.

Because it is so easily spread, Jaeger said, herd immunity requires about 95% of a given population to be vaccinated against measles.

According to public health data, 95% of Niagara secondary school students are vaccinated. However, only 85% of elementary school students are.

Vaccination rates will vary from school to school, Jaeger said, but the loss of herd immunity means the measles virus will have a much easier time spreading if it arrives in a local elementary school.

She said children are at a much higher risk of developing complications from the measles than adults. She said about 30% of children who contract measles can develop pneumonia, ear infections or brain swell-

VACCINATION FACTS

During 2013, an estimated 145,000 measles cases were reported worldwide.

An increase in vaccinations between the years 2000 and 2013 led to a drop-off of nearly 75% in reported cases compared to previous years.

Based on those numbers, it's estimated vaccinations saved 15.6 million lives in that time.

Source: World Health Organization

ing.

One or two people out of a thousand who contract measles will die.

Jaeger blames the decline in vaccination rates for the revival of measles in North America, a decline largely driven by debunked, but still popular ideas that vaccines are somehow linked to autism.

"Both as a family physician and in my role in public health, I keep trying to find the right words to make people understand that the measles vaccine is very effective and it is safe," she said. Jaeger could not say much about the Niagara Falls woman who contracted measles, other than to say she was not vaccinated.

Jaeger said the woman was admitted to Greater Niagara General Hospital for treatment.

The health department says anyone who was in the hospital from 3 p.m. on Feb. 2 to noon on Feb. 2 in Unit C, might have been exposed to the virus. Anyone at the hospital during that time in that unit is being asked to contact the public health department at 905-688-8248, ext. 7330 or after hours at 905-984-3690.

The health department is also urging all Niagara residents to ensure their vaccinations are up to date. Anyone born before 1970 and who can confirm they had a dose of the MMR vaccine doesn't need further vaccination.

Health officials say that's because measles was more prevalent prior to 1970, and people were most likely exposed to the virus.

Anyone born after 1970 needs two doses of the vaccine.

If you are unsure of your vaccination status, contact your doctor.

grant.lafleche@summedia.ca

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LAKE ERIE SHORELINE: Make a date for Feb. 14

Workshop aimed at Long Beach area improvements

GREG FURMINGER
QMI Agency Niagara

If you have a love affair with Wainfleet's beaches, you've got a date on Valentine's Day.

As the township looks at ways to enhance the Lake Erie public beach access in the Long Beach area — specifically at the end of Brown Rd. — a two-hour community workshop will be conducted Saturday, Feb. 14, when residents can have a say on improvements.

"We want to know what they want, rather than the township telling them what they get," said township planner Mike Sullivan.

Considerations so far include washrooms, aspects of beautification, a walkway, erosion-prevention initiatives and paid parking at nearby businesses.

At this point the municipality is not going ahead with any plans — but there is an opportunity to take advantage of matching project funding.

Niagara Region's evolving Niagara Lakefront Enhancement Strategy (LES) will sup-

port projects that enhance public access and enjoyment of local lakefronts, while protecting them. Improved access includes for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and recreational boaters.

The strategy also encourages acquisition of lakefront assets for regional economic, cultural, environmental and quality of life benefits.

Niagara Region's estimated capital budget for LES projects is \$10 million over the next decade.

Municipalities will be able to apply for funding or in-kind support. Grants will have a cap of \$500,000 per three-year cycle to be allocated to any one municipality.

This is the second year that funding has been made available. Last year Port Colborne, Port Erie, St. Catharines and Grimsby were awarded support, said Sullivan, who sits on the strategy's municipal advisory group, but who would have to declare a conflict when voting on a Wainfleet application.



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BUDGET

Port Colborne may hire deputy fire chief at estimated \$110,000 salary

MARGARET FINTH
QM Agency Niagara

It was a hot topic that received the cold shoulder from some councillors last Friday afternoon as budget deliberations continued in Port Colborne.

The question at hand was whether or not the city should be hiring a deputy fire chief — and reviews came back mixed.

The request, a result of the findings from the fire master planning committee, came in from fire Chief Tom Cartwright, who explained to council that despite an ever-increasing workload, staffing levels in the fire department have remained stagnant.

Changes to provincial requirements, human resource issues, managing emergency responses and succession planning, as well as an in-depth core service review, have all impacted the department's workload, he said. Call volumes have also increased to more than 1,000 a year from more than 600 in 1997, he added.

"The need is there and it doesn't impact the budget financially," Cartwright said.

The city created the position of public liaison officer in 2010 and when the employee retired at the end of 2013, it was left vacant.

The funds to support that job, however, remained in the fire department's budget for 2014, a total of \$126,000 including benefits.

That money was instead put into a reserve to cover sick-leave payouts for two retirees and to re-establish a sick-leave reserve for future retirees.

The reserve currently has about \$100,000, Peter Senese, the city's director of community and corporate services, estimated.

Ward 1 Coun. Dave Elliott asked how the reserve would be replenished if the position was filled.

With three members of the fire department able to retire in the next seven years, the reserve "at this point in time is fully funded for the liability that exists in the (near) future," Senese said.

The city, he said, has previously committed \$20,000 a year to the reserve to ensure it's sustained. Port Colborne also has provincial funding available in its 2015 budget that had yet to be allotted, he added.

Cartwright said the deputy position would create savings in the department with a reduction of acting chief's pay and overtime.

The salary, estimated in the area of \$110,000, would be set with no overtime.

"We're taking the vacant position, redefining the duties," said chief administrative officer Rob Heil, who urged council to consider approving the ask.

"We can use this funding to fill a hole, to try to cover off the tons of downloading and realignment of duties."

Much of the work done by the city's former deputy, retired now for several years, has instead fallen on the shoulders of the fire prevention officer, impeding his ability to complete all of his duties, Cartwright said.

Ward 1 Coun. Dave Elliott questioned whether mandatory responsibilities taken on by the fire department could be re-evaluated.

Items such as emergency planning, city staff training, a comprehensive public education program and industrial training program are not required, Cartwright said.

"We can reduce that, but you need to understand that it will affect core services and will need to be delegated to someone else."

Ceasing those services would still not relieve the pressure on the fire prevention officer, Cartwright added.

The recommendation to hire was approved with councillors Ron Rodnet, Butters, Angie Desmarais, Yvon Doucet

and Bea Kenny voting in favour and councillors Frank Danch,

Elliott and John Mayne voting against.

While the motion was approved Friday, council will still have the opportunity during future budget meetings to alter or remove the item before the budget is finalized.

A report outlining the percentage of Port Colborne's budget dedicated to fire services as compared to other similarly sized municipalities is expected to come forward at a future meeting.

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■ POWER OF BEING A GIRL CONFERENCE

Guiding young women into adulthood

ALISON LANGLEY
QMI Agency/Niagara

Grade 10 girls from across Niagara will get a lesson in self-esteem and empowerment courtesy of journalist and former model by Prosper. Prosper will be a guest speaker at the ninth annual Power of Being a Girl Confer-

ence today (Thursday) at the Merrittion Lions Club in St. Catharines.

"Events like these are extremely important in the development of young minds because now is the time when they begin making decisions that affect who they become in the future," Prosper said. "They need to know how to

think critically and never take anything at face value. Building the confidence in who they are while they're still young will play a huge role in the adults they will be in the future."

Two hundred students have been invited to attend the event hosted by YWCA Niagara Region.

POWER OF BEING A GIRL

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For more information, call 905-988-3528 ext. 3244 or e-mail lifekills@ywcarniagararegion.ca.

are as uniquely beautiful. Everyone has beauty because beauty is diverse."

The conference includes educational programming designed to inspire and empower girls to be comfortable in their bodies.

"The conference is the only event in this region that brings together 200 Grade 10 girls to speak about issues they face," said Krystal Snider, life skills co-ordinator at the YWCA Niagara Region.

"The goal of this day is to empower young women to have a voice and to question the world around them. With this year's focus on body image we hope to instill an understanding that all bodies are different and that they all are beautiful."

The day's agenda includes guest speakers, a photography project and discussions surrounding a healthy body image.

Alison.langley@surmedia.ca
Twitter: @trishlangley

Prosper will discuss self-esteem and body image as it relates to the media and share personal stories of working in the modelling and television industries.

"I hope that the participants take away the fact that beauty comes from within and that there is no such thing as perfection," she said.

"The media creates images that often have us questioning our self-worth; whether you're young or old, I hope the girls will walk away from the presentation with a mind that asks questions about what they see and accepts who they

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LOCAL NEWS

It's a fundraiser, of chorus



GREG FUDWINGER/QUI AGENCY NIAGARA

Chorus Niagara performs at Seaway Mall's Centre Court in Welland Saturday, during its annual singathon fundraiser. A variety of guest conductors, including majors and radio personalities, were shown by artistic director Robert Cooper how to use the balloon during the daylong affair. Donations to Chorus Niagara can be made at www.canadahelps.org.

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The City of Port Colborne would like to inform the public that currently the extension of Helen Street West of Oakwood Street is NOT a through roadway and never has been designated as a Municipal Road.

In the past residents have used this portion of road as access to and from West Side Road, via use of the West Side Arena parking lot. The roadway known as Helen Street only extends to the current Parks Maintenance Yard.

With the recent sale of the old West Side Arena to a private firm, traffic restrictions have resulted. The Municipality no longer owns the Arena property and subsequently the public has no right to access the West Side Road through that property.

Temporary signage is in place informing residents of the restriction on through traffic, along with temporary barricading being established.

Following final budget deliberations, staff, at the direction of Council, will be installing permanent delineation, possible fencing and new signage to reflect this new traffic pattern.

The cooperation of all citizens will be greatly appreciated.

Ron Hanson, C.E.T.

Director of Engineering and Operations

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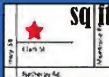
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■ **EDUCATION:** Original pre-qualification list angered Niagara construction group

College opens bidding to include locals

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara College has reversed its decision and will allow local contractors to bid on five upcoming major projects.

The decision comes after the Niagara Construction Association went to the media to complain about the fact no local companies made the list of 15 pre-qualified contractors for the five projects worth around \$30 million.

At the time, Niagara College president Dan Patterson said the school was simply following the rules under the province's procurement policy, which doesn't allow favouritism based on location.

Of the 43 companies that bid to gain pre-qualified status, four were local, but the 15 selected were all from outside the region.

However, Patterson has expanded the list of pre-qualified companies from 15 to 29, which includes local general contractors T.R. Himan Contractors from Fonthill and Merit Contractors Niagara from St. Catharines.

Patterson said after meeting with the local contractors and the school's purchasing department, the college decided to increase the number, allowing the local companies to be included.

Following the provincial procurement policy, the col-

lege scored all 43 bidders based on a variety of factors, such as past experience, and gave them a score out of 100. Only contractors that earned 70 or higher could be considered.

"Within that range, we had the discretion to pick a smaller number (of pre-qualified)," Patterson said. "We picked 15 qualified contractors."

He said after meeting with the Niagara Construction Association and with the school's purchasing department, it was decided that expanding the number of pre-qualified contractors wouldn't violate any rules.

"It still adheres to our procurement documents to be fair, open and transparent,"

said Patterson.

Incoming Niagara Construction Association president Kevin Brown, of King Contractors in Niagara Falls, called it a positive step forward.

"We're thrilled with the whole thing. We're happy we'll get some local input from two local general contractors, which may motivate some local subtrades to price the work as well," he said.

Part of the NCA's concern when no local contractors were selected was that the out-of-region general contractors would turn to out-of-region sub-contractors and construction workers to do the work.

The five major projects on

the request for pre-qualified bidders are a \$9-million athletic facility and a \$9-million culinary building expansion, both at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus, as well as a \$4.2-million expansion to the skills trade centre, a \$4-million athletic centre expansion and a \$3.75-million student commons and food court upgrade all for the Welland campus.

But Patterson said there's more work on the horizon, putting the total dollar value at close to \$50 million over the next five or so years.

"(Thursday), I was meeting with our team at the campus and I'm excited about getting ahead ready," he said. "These are really important projects

for the college and the community."

Driving the development are Niagara College's reputation for its applied research and food and wine programs, and an overall increase in enrolment, Patterson said.

"The provincial and federal governments see that the college is very much connected to employers," he said, pointing out that the five upcoming projects will be largely funded by those two levels of government. In addition to a capital campaign.

Brown said the NCA is glad to have the issue behind it.

"We're going to try to build a little better relationship with them," he said. "We'll try to meet a couple of times a year to talk about what they're doing, what we're doing and how we can work together and help the graduates."

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■ RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS



MARYANNE FIRTH/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Stay Positive founder Melanie Olah holds a winning rim from Tim Hortons' Roll Up the Rim promotion. The random act of kindness group is collecting winning rims in order to bring treats to people in need of a boost in the community.

Group won't fritter away opportunity to help

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Stay Positive is on a Rroll.

This is the second year the local group, which performs random acts of kindness in the community, has used a popular Tim Hortons promotion to bring happiness to others.

When the fast-food franchise introduces its Roll Up the Rim contest each winter, Melanie Olah can barely contain her excitement.

The sight of the signature red cups means it's time for the Stay Positive founder to begin her quest to collect the contest's winning rims.

Last year, the group collected 47 winning doughnut rims and used them to deliver sweets to Welland's five fire halls.

"We did it to say thank you to the firefighters, the people who take care of us," Olah said.

This year, she decided to use the Tim Hortons promotion to boost the spirits of people going through a difficult time, as well as the staff who care for them.

Once the tiny tabs are collected, the plan is to deliver the tasty pick-me-ups to people at Hospice Niagara, Walker Family Cancer Centre and Wellspring Niagara.

Olah's goal is to double-double up on winning Timmies rims so the group can hand out twice the amount of doughnuts this time around.

The treats will come with notes just as sweet, courtesy of the youngsters at A Child's World, Family Child Care Services

of Niagara.

"It makes it that much more special," Olah said of the added drawings and kind words that will accompany the goodies.

"I hope that it brightens an otherwise gloomy day."

She said it is exhilarating to be able to do nice things for others and humbling to see how the Stay Positive movement has begun to spread across the region.

She's often contacted by people with items they'd like to see passed on to help someone in need or to improve their day.

While doughnut rims are the target for this initiative, Stay Positive will accept any winners and make sure they are used to put a smile on someone's face.

"We're not asking for much. We're asking for your doughnut tab, to help make someone out in the community feel good," Olah said.

"Use that cup to cheer someone up." Collection jars for the rims will be set up for students at local high schools and for the public at the Rex Hotel, 346 King St. in Welland.

Stay Positive will also pick up rims if e-mailed at melanie.olah@gmail.com or contacted through the group's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/staypositiveRAOK.

Rims will be collected until the end of April and the treats delivered in early May.

maryanne.firth@sumedia.ca
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